

Major Idea

This strategy introduces the pre-kindergarten student to important state symbols and the concept of voting.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. recognize symbols representing Texas
2. make a storybook about Texas symbols
3. demonstrate an understanding that it is necessary to make choices
4. know the basic layout of a polling place
5. demonstrate an understanding of voting by participating in an election

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

K.10C; K.15A, B, D; K.16A, B; K.17B; 1.2C; 1.10A, B; 1.11A, B, C; 1.13C; 1.17A, B, D; 1.18A, B; 1.19B; 2.12B; 2.14B, C; 2.17A, B, E; 2.18A, B; 2.19B; 3.9C, 3.10C; 4.17A.

Social Studies Essential Elements

Social/emotional development: 1A, B; 2A, C; 3A.

Intellectual development: 1A, D, F; 2A, B, E, F.

Aesthetic development: 1A.

Physical development: 1B.

Materials Needed

Attachment 1: Symbols of Texas
 Attachment 2: State Seal
 Attachment 3: Graphics for State Seal
 Attachment 4: Southern Pecan Pie Recipe
 Attachment 5: Texas Wildlife
 Attachment 6: Polling Place
 Attachment 7: Sample Ballot
 Attachment 8: Ballot Box/Voting Booth

Markers
 Popcorn
 Cups
 Wildflower seeds

Crayons
 Blue/purple dry tempera paint
 Glue
 Ingredients for pecan pie

Paper	Sock
Pecans	Magazines
Leaves	Co =tton
Scissors	
Photograph or plastic or silk bluebonnet flower	

Vocabulary

symbol	election
voting	tally
choice	ballot box
mock	voting booth
polling place	ballot

Teaching Strategies

Introduce various state symbols of Texas and the concept of voting by studying the voting process and by conducting a mock election.

1. Lead the class in a discussion: "What is a symbol?" Ask students what their initials are and explain how their initials are a representation, or a symbol of them. Texas also has symbols, one of which is the State Seal. Introduce students to other symbols of Texas (**Attachment 1**).
2. Have students draw the state seal from a picture (**Attachment 2**). Have students make a state seal for an art project using graphics (**Attachment 3**), leaves and branches from the schoolyard.
3. If you live in Austin, or if you are visiting Austin, take a trip to the State Capitol and see how the state seal was used in the construction of the Capitol and the Extension. Teachers note: the state seal is etched in glass on windows, representatives and senators chairs, on doorknobs, etc. Walking through the Capitol, see how many state seals your students can count.
4. Introduce the bluebonnet as the state flower of Texas. Teachers should provide a photograph, plastic or silk bluebonnet flower and have students draw the flower. Teachers note: it is against the law to deface state property, therefore, picking bluebonnets from a state park or along a highway where the state has planted wildflowers is unlawful. Moreover, one flower could possibly contain up to 20 blooms. Once picked, that means 20 less bluebonnets will grow next year. Consider this: if you have 20 students in your class and each picks one bluebonnet, a potential 400 less bluebonnets would be enjoyed next year. Share this information with your students so they understand the importance of preserving nature. For further information on wildflowers of Texas, contact the National Wildflower Research Center, 4801 La Crosse Avenue, Austin, TX 78739, telephone (512) 292-4200. The National

Wildflower Research Center, opened and dedicated by Lady Bird Johnson in 1995, is open to the public Tuesday through Sunday. For an art project, students could laminate their drawing and use as a bookmark. An alternative activity would be to read books to the class discussing Texas wildflowers. One well-known children's author is Tomie de Paola, who has written books about the Indian Paint Brush and the Bluebonnet.

5. Using popcorn, shake in dry purple/blue tempera paint, coloring the popcorn and have students make bluebonnet pictures. (You can also use cotton for this activity.) Students might want to use grasses collected to form the stem and leaves of the flower.
6. Have each student bring an old sock to school. Take a field trip to any local field with wildflowers. Have each student mist their sock with a spray bottle of water, put the old sock over their shoe, and walk through the field collecting various seeds on their sock. Next, take sock off, hang in a sunny area, mist each day, and watch the wildflowers sprout!
7. Have students plant wildflower seeds in cups and observe their growth. Discuss and ask students to describe the texture, color, and smell of each wildflower. Teachers note: there is a good chance the wildflower seeds will not grow to flower, the teacher should take the class on a field trip to a wildflower field in this case.
8. Teacher should discuss the state bird, the mockingbird. Ask students "How do you think this bird got its name?" What is mocking and give an example. Have students play a mocking game, similar to "Simon Says."
9. Have students go to the library and see if they can find a book on mockingbirds (tapes of Texas bird sounds are also available), or better yet, see if they can find one at a nature conservatory in your area.
10. Ask students to gather leaves from the school playground. Teacher should draw a tree trunk and branches, and have the students glue the leaves on the branches, replicating a pecan tree. Teacher should bring a pecan to class and let students feel, crack, and taste.
11. As a class project, make a pecan pie (**Attachment 4**)
12. Take class on a nature adventure and locate a pecan tree. What makes a pecan tree different from other trees?
13. Discuss Texas wildlife (longhorn, armadillo, whitetail deer, bobcat, prairie dog, black-tailed rattlesnake) and how these wildlife have become symbols of Texas. Invite a guest speaker from Texas Parks and Wildlife, your local Audubon Society, etc. (**Attachment 5**).

14. Have students compile a storybook about the Texas symbols they have studied. Have each student make a page for the book and then compile, or use pictures from magazines.
15. Discuss the subject of voting. What is voting? Introduce the question "How do we get what we want?" Explain to students that their parents vote in elections for president, for example. Ask if anyone knows who the president is, or where he or she lives. Discuss the voting process. Ask if any student has ever been to a polling place with their parent(s). Describe what a polling place looks like, what a ballot looks like, and how a person casts their vote (**Attachment 6**).

Lead students in an exercise which involves voting for one of two choices. Explain what a choice is. Sample activity: which book would you like to hear for afternoon story time? Explain to students that they only get to vote for one book, and only get to vote one time. Teacher should introduce both books and have students vote by: show of hands, by voice vote ("aye" for yes, "nay" for no), or by ballot. Teacher note: students could vote on anything of interest to them, such as favorite afternoon snack, where to go on the next field trip, a school color, school or classroom mascot, or even a mock election for president or governor (**Attachment 7**).

16. Make a voting booth and ballot box for your mock election. Students can decorate the ballot boxes and voting booths with construction paper and cutouts from magazines, or they can draw or paint the box or voting booth (**Attachment 8**).
17. Conduct a mock election and introduce students to the concept of tallying ballots. Let the students actually stack and count the ballots. Teachers note: instead of using ballots, you could use colored poker chips. Example: red poker chip represents Candidate A, blue poker chip represents Candidate B. After counting has been completed, throw a victory party! If you voted on any type of food or snack, be sure to provide the winning treat at the party.

Evaluation

No formal evaluation
Informal observations